

Message

---

**From:** Scharf, Steven (DEC) [steven.scharf@dec.ny.gov]  
**Sent:** 4/27/2016 7:05:05 PM  
**To:** Stein, Carol [Stein.Carol@epa.gov]; Wilkie, Henry (DEC) [henry.wilkie@dec.ny.gov]  
**Subject:** RE: Newsday Article on Merrick Activists

Say,

Leave Merrick out of this, that's my home town!

Steve

---

**From:** Stein, Carol [mailto:Stein.Carol@epa.gov]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 27, 2016 3:04 PM  
**To:** Wilkie, Henry (DEC); Scharf, Steven (DEC)  
**Subject:** re: Newsday Article on Merrick Activists

*ATTENTION: This email came from an external source. Do not open attachments or click on links from unknown senders or unexpected emails.*

Hi Henry and Steve - I was wondering if you may have seen the news article, below, among all the other things that are sent your way. In the article, below, I added yellow highlights to particularly interesting and/or items that just were not written correctly, e.g. Saladino's bill did not actually require the Navy and Northrop-Grumman to contain the plume (Is it true that Merrick residents are known as 'Merokeans'?)

I was wondering if Northrop-Grumman had sent a written response yet to DEC's letter of March 17<sup>th</sup>. Also, I don't seem to have a copy of DEC's March 17<sup>th</sup> letter to Northrop-Grumman. Pls email it to me when you have the chance. Thank you.

Also, when you have the chance, I would be interested in hearing how the RAB meeting went last week. I hope that things were peaceful, and that you were able to get out at a reasonable hour.

Thanks,

Carol

---

**From:** Shore, Berry  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 26, 2016 10:10 AM  
**To:** Stein, Carol <Stein.Carol@epa.gov>  
**Subject:** From Today's Early Morning Clips

## **A Widening Toxic Threat**

### **Merrick activists want chemical plume cleaned up**

LI HERALD

By Scott Brinton

April 25, 2016

A group of Merrick activists is calling on the State Department of Environmental Conservation to take over cleanup of the Grumman/Navy chemical plume that is migrating underground from Bethpage into Wantagh and Seaford.

Scott Brinton/Herald

Claudia Borecky, second from left, president of the North Merrick Civic Association, and David Denenberg, a former Nassau County legislator from Merrick, led a news conference last Thursday to urge the State Department of Environmental Conservation to take over cleanup of an underground chemical plume caused by Grumman and the Navy. They were joined by Dr. Dean Hart, of Brookville, and Audrey Ciuffo and David Stonehill, both of Merrick.

A half-dozen Nassau County environmental and civic activists, most from Merrick, came to Bethpage Community Park on April 21 — the day before Earth Day — to call on the state to accelerate efforts to clean up a massive chemical plume that has crept for more than seven decades from Bethpage toward South Oyster Bay.

The plume, a slurry of potentially cancer-causing chemicals that includes trichloroethylene, or TCE, is moving steadily through groundwater. Activists said they worry that the plume might contaminate Long Island's aquifers. Those underground stores, hundreds of feet below the surface and thousands of years old, supply the Island's drinking water.

David Denenberg, a former Nassau County legislator from Merrick, who was among the activists, said the state should apply money from its Superfund to clean up the Bethpage plume immediately and then seek compensation from the responsible parties — Northrop Grumman and the U.S. Navy.

"We're saying just do it," said Denenberg, an environmental engineer by training.

In 2014, the state Legislature passed a measure requiring that Northrop Grumman and the Navy contain the plume, which Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed.

Assemblyman Anthony Saladino, a Republican from Massapequa, was among the bill's sponsors. He earlier told the Herald that the plume must be stopped before it infiltrates more drinking-water wells than it already has — 20 in all.

Saladino said he worries about untainted wells owned by the Massapequa Water District and Long Island American Water, which supplies Wantagh-Seaford and Bellmore-Merrick.

"There is no reason not to clean up," Saladino said. "It's expensive...but don't let the plume get to areas that have not already been affected."

Long Island's biggest threat?

On April 20, the Town of Oyster Bay closed part of Bethpage Community Park because an anonymous tipster reported to Bethpage Water District that hazardous waste drums that were dug up at the one-time Grumman property more than two decades ago were still there. They had not, the whistleblower said, been removed during a site investigation, but rather were buried where they were found.

Oyster Bay Supervisor John Venditto, a Republican, said the town closed the playground and tennis courts "as a precautionary measure."

"We haven't had any indication where the drums might be," Venditto said. "I contacted the DEC directly. I spoke with the commissioner directly. The DEC is on it."

"We are sitting here waiting for the DEC to complete its investigation," he continued. "The DEC has indicated that they're hopeful they can wrap this up in the next business week."

The activists held a news conference outside the empty playground. Denenberg, who was joined by North Merrick Civic Association President Claudia Borecky, among other Merokeans, expressed grave concern over the plume. "If this isn't Long Island's number-one environmental issue, I'd like you to show it to me," he said.

'Not thorough enough'

Denenberg, Borecky and Donald Davidson formed a new environmental organization — Clean Air, Water and Soil, or CAWS — to lobby the state to expedite cleanup of the plume, which has spread as far south as North Wantagh and northern Seaford. Monitoring wells are now being installed on streets in those communities to determine more exactly the extent of the plume.

On March 17, the DEC sent a letter to Northrop Grumman, demanding that it act immediately to study the plume and remediate it. If not, the DEC indicated, it might take over the cleanup. The state's letter concludes, "If Northrop Grumman does not agree to implement an expedited remediation schedule, the state will perform the cleanup with Superfund monies and take legal action against Northrop Grumman to recover all costs," according to Denenberg.

Last May, the DEC ordered Northrop Grumman to "address elevated levels of groundwater contamination originating at its Bethpage site." Northrop Grumman must cooperate with the Navy, the state said.

The then DEC Commissioner Joseph Martens called the order "a significant step forward."

Denenberg wondered whether the DEC had sufficient money in the Superfund to take over the cleanup. A DEC official could not be reached at press time on Monday afternoon.

To date, Northrop Grumman and the Navy have spent more than \$100 million cleaning up the plume, said State Sen. Kemp Hannon, a Republican of Garden City, whose district includes part of Bethpage. That figure, though, could be as high as \$200 million, according to the Associated Press. Experts estimate that finishing the remediation project could cost \$100 million to \$300 million.

Denenberg, Borecky and Davidson co-signed an April 21 letter to acting DEC Commissioner Basil Seggios. They noted that Navy representatives met with residents on April 20, and the Navy appears committed to cleaning up the plume.

The Navy has said that it plans to tackle contamination "hotspots" first. These are areas where pollutants thousands of times above acceptable levels have been uncovered. Then it will undertake a full-scale cleanup beginning in 2022.

2022 is too late, Denenberg said he believes. Thirty-five drinking-water wells are threatened by the plume as it migrates southward, he noted. The ever-widening contamination zone must be stopped and removed before it infiltrates water supplies, he said.

A deeper investigation of the probe and potentially the cleanup are "imminent," Hannon said he believes, though he did not give a timetable. "What had been done before wasn't thorough enough," he said. "As soon as you can find the pollution and start acting on it, the better off you are."

The Bethpage Water District, which is most affected by the plume, has dug a well north of the plume to protect the drinking-water supply, Hannon said.

Andrew Hackmack contributed reporting to this story.

#### A history of contamination

Northrop Grumman, formerly Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation and later Grumman Aerospace, dumped or mishandled an array of potentially cancer-causing chemicals at its 635-acre manufacturing plant in central Bethpage during the 1940s and '50s. The Navy owned more than a hundred acres of the property and leased them to Grumman.

Among other substances, hazardous waste included chromium, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and volatile organic compounds, according to a 2015 DEC report. Those substances, the DEC said, could be found in the chlorinated solvents used to clean or degrease machine parts.

Contamination at the former plant, which operated from 1930 to 1994, was first discovered in the 1970s, when Grumman employees noticed “an unusual taste and odor emanating from water faucets located at the site,” according to the Bethpage Water District. Grumman had its own well system, separate from the district.

Testing by the state and county health departments confirmed that a chemical called trichloroethylene, or TCE, was in the water at the plant. Grumman then asked to connect its water mains to the local supply. Low levels of TCE contamination were also discovered at one Bethpage Water District well, which was closed.

Officials first suspected that chemical contamination was spreading southward in 1984. In 1988, the Bethpage Water District installed a treatment facility to remove TCE from the water, paid for by Grumman.

Contamination at Bethpage Community Park, which was once part of Grumman’s property, was first discovered in 1995. Testing revealed PCBs, but according to the water district, the DEC delayed an investigation into the contamination until 2005, when further testing by Grumman was finally ordered.

Officials found “significant levels of PCBs and TCE in park soils,” according to the water district. The park was closed and remediated. The baseball field at the back of the park, however, never reopened because of chemical contamination, said Supervisor John Venditto. It’s now overgrown with weeds.

— Scott Brinton